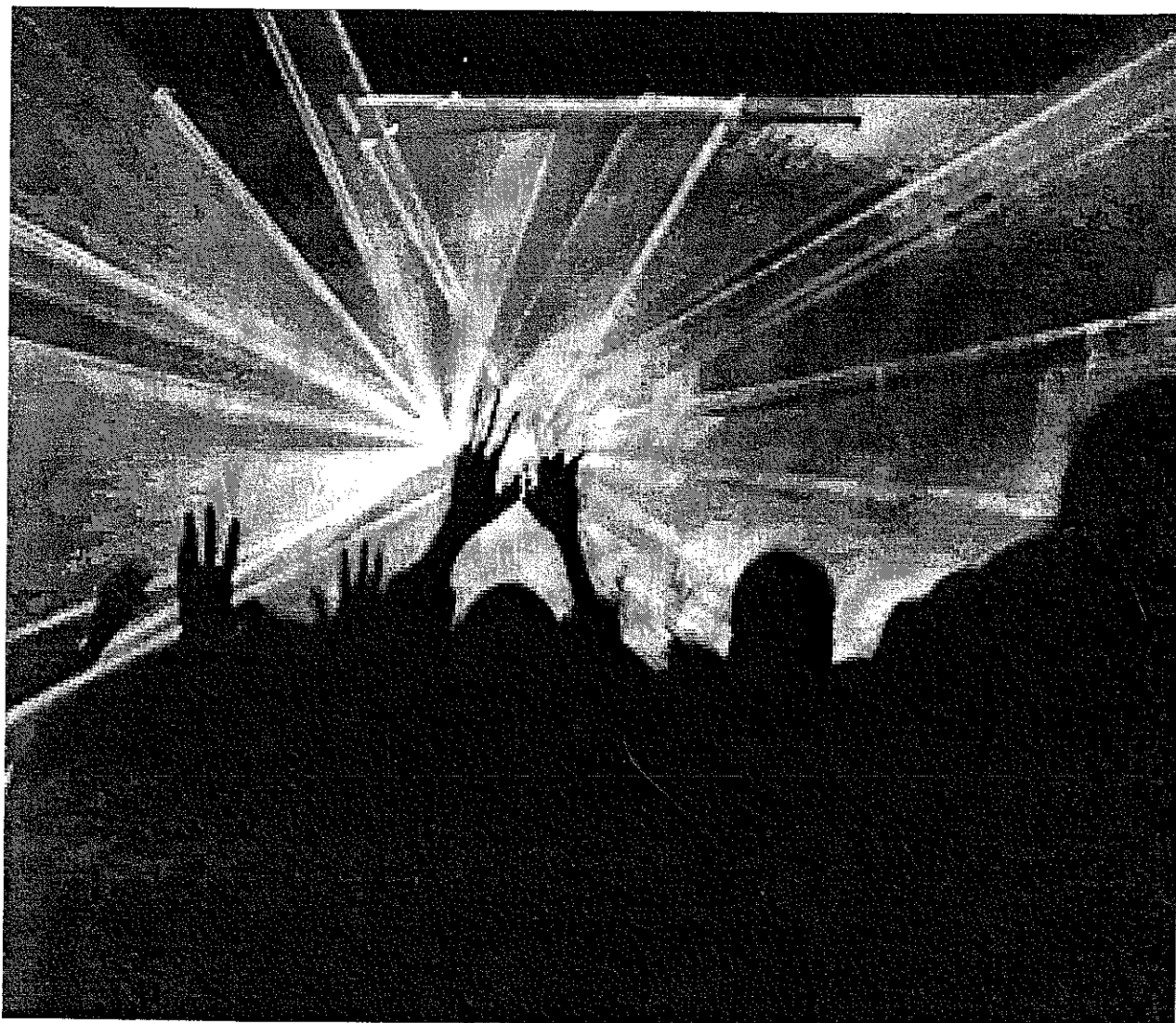


Connect

supporting student participation

ABN: 98 174 663 341

***Number 132:
December 2001***



*Also in
this
issue:*

- International River Health Conference
- Student-Run Refugee Forum
- Inclusive Approaches to Youth Participation
- Productive Learning: Writing and Publishing
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- Students Leading: Peer Drug Education
- Student Voice, Student Agency, Student Participation
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& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #26

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*The laser show at the River Health Conference dance...
or a star in the east leading the way for Christmas?
This photo (and photos on pages 3-5) from the
International River Health Conference web site:
<http://www.riverhealth.com>
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This Issue:

How fast another year goes. This issue marks 22 years of publication for Connect - as an independent, unfunded advocate for active student participation in school governance and curriculum.

In planning the previous issue, I hunted for stories about positive and participatory programs that were responding to these uncertain and dangerous times. Slowly, articles have begun to arrive. Here are: students teaching others about preserving their environment, students organising discussions about refugees, students planning curriculum materials on terrorism and war, students training to tackle racism and isolation.

At the same time, I have been teaching within a University course and trying to use the same principles espoused in many of the articles in Connect: that learning should involve a shared purpose that transcends the 'private gain' of individuals or the private demonstration of outcomes which are seen only by a teacher or examiner.

The projects, approaches, conferences and initiatives outlined here have a *strong* sense of purpose and of *audience* beyond the learners. At the River Health Conference, students taught other students; at the refugee forum at Sydney Road Community School, parents and members of the local community were key participants; the JSC student researchers presented recommendations to a Shopping Centre management; secondary students planned teaching materials for primary school students; and my seminar class wrote and published a book (in nine weeks) explaining to beginning teachers and others how policies are developed and implemented.

Powerful pedagogies. Purposeful learning. And excitement, engagement and commitment follows.

A long essay in this issue, from a beginning teacher, also reflects on issues about 'student voice' and 'student action'. It opens useful windows to some interesting international work - and the 'documents available' listed in this issue enable you to follow up some of these studies on 'consulting students' in the UK. I hope to meet up with these and other researchers and advocates during 2002, bringing back stories of their work, and taking the stories documented in Connect to them.

To enable that to happen, I'm planning two double issues during 2002: one in March (#133-134), and the next (#135-136) in August. So there will be a bit of a time gap in publication ... but some fascinating and substantial reading to make up for it.

Best wishes for the holidays. We want to see you refreshed and enthusiastic (as ever) in the new year. If you are studying or teaching in schools, a great Christmas or New Year gift for Connect would be an article about your student participation practices ... yes! that article that you've been putting off writing. Until now! It will be our great delight to read it and publish it in March.

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #133-134 - March 2002
Deadline for material: end of February

2001 MDBC INTERNATIONAL RIVER HEALTH CONFERENCE

One life, one river *our future*



International River Health Conference Closes in Stunning Style

Mildura rocked like it's never rocked before when Ella and Jesse Hooper of internationally recognised band Killing Heidi took the stage to close the 2001 Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) International River Health Conference. As well as 400 students, 100 teachers and 50 VIPs from around the world, 50 disadvantaged children from around Sunraysia also attended the final night (with sponsorship from VicHealth).

The three-day 2001 MDBC International River Health Conference - for year 5 to 11 students from across Australia and around the world - received further support from some big names. Located on the banks of the mighty Murray River in Mildura, Victoria, the event ran from 14th to 17th of October and started National Water Week 2001. Conference organiser and 2001 Young Australian of the Year (Environment), Arron Wood said, "The celebrities really added to the profile of what is already a huge event. It just shows that everyone is interested in doing something for the environment and the youth of Australia".

The Conference also saw the announcement of national winners for Heywire - the ABC Gives Regional Youth a Voice. Heywire is a competition run by ABC Radio to get the voices of 16-22 year old young people from regional Australia onto the radio, talking about the important life issues for them.

Although the event gained the support of high profile people, Mr Wood stresses that the Conference was an event by kids for kids. "The real unique aspect of the Conference is that the students develop the workshops, work with mentors in the lead-up to the event and then present to their peers in October".

Vice Principal of Merbein Secondary College in Mildura, Robyn Blackie said, "Kids teaching kids is a very powerful form of learning. To be able to understand a subject well enough to relay it to your peers in a workshop situation is the highest form of learning". Registrations rolled in from every State and Territory across Australia; over 480 registrations were received with close to 250 students and teachers missing out. Participants included students from South Africa, Netherlands, Brazil and Canada. Brazilian student, Elisabeth Callegaro, presented on issues associated with the Amazon basin.

The Conference dealt with many complex and important issues, including:

- involvement of young people in management of our environment;
- the future of our rivers and water quality;
- the importance of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and the relationship Indigenous peoples had with their natural environment; and
- the value of kids teaching kids as a powerful learning method.

Mr Wood said, "The 2001 MDBC International River Health Conference was the culmination of a process. This process involved students working with expert mentors for many months prior to the event, and results in curriculum materials that will be in Australian schools for many years after the event. Most importantly, the process is about promoting kids teaching kids as the highest form of learning and aiming for a cultural change in the way we view, use and perceive our natural environment. The 2001 MDBC





International River Health Conference is less about a Conference and more about a lasting commitment to our youth and the sustainable use of our environment. This is no 'flash in the pan' concept; it is the future of learning and the future of our River, wherever that river may be."

The Conference was strongly supported by naming-rights sponsor the Murray Darling Basin Commission and major sponsors NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation, Waterwatch Australia through the Natural Heritage Trust, the Federal Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Forestry Australia, Network TEN, the Government of South Australia, Save the Murray, Unilever Australasia, the Myer Foundation, WIN Television, the Premier's Department of New South Wales and the Queensland Government Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

"The sponsors are contributing more than money," Mr Wood said, "although the event wouldn't run without it. They are demonstrating a real commitment to young people and the future management of our precious environmental resources".

The budget meant once schools got to the event, all meals, accommodation, entrance to the three-day program, Conference CD, video, curriculum materials, cap, t-shirt, backpack and conference mug were all free. "Basically what the sponsors are doing is making sure the event is accessible to all schools around Australia. This is not an elitist event; we wanted to be sure all schools who wanted to attend could do so. We received support from Water Authorities and Rotary clubs who helped to sponsor travel costs for schools in their region to get to the event".

The Conference aimed to develop young people who were motivated, with high self esteem and respect for others. In this way the Conference sought to promote the virtues of well-rounded and balanced individuals, working as teams to face a common goal – the declining health of our rivers. Students who have access to this type of learning will be more able to promote a sense of community as



they become leaders and decision-makers themselves.

"It is time for environmental education to become an integral component, or the basis of, community education. Providing the next generation with a sense of place and a realisation that proper management of their place will ultimately have an impact on their

planet, is the key to successful environmental education and involvement."

Comments from the Conference evaluations really sum up the success of the event:

"It was a pleasure for ABC Rural to be involved with such a well organised conference. You did a spectacular job managing such a diverse agenda, with children spanning such a wide age group. The assistance you were able to provide to Bush Telegraph and Country Hour was much appreciated." **Shane Mahony, ABC Radio National Editor Rural**

"We would just like to say that the Conference was great. We learned so much about the Murray. Now we are thinking about doing a project on the Murray. We loved it sooooo much that we would be grateful if we could know the details about the next year's International River Health Conference." **Jessica Campbell and Kira Small, Tallangatta Secondary College**

"You are to be congratulated for a wonderful effort again with the conference. My kids had a great time, met new friends, made contacts to further their ideas, learnt from others and generally had a terrific time (many jealous ones left behind). A JOB WELL DONE!" **Hayden Pilgrim, Natte Yallock Primary School**

"I think it's fantastic that young people are involved in a Conference like this." **Senator Lyn Allison, Chair of the Senate Environment**

Committee

"My involvement with the MDBC International River Health Conference has been one I will never forget. Most importantly, it has taught me things I wouldn't have dreamt of, and that together we can make the environment one of the biggest and most important issues of the future.



This Conference has taught me that one person can make a difference, that little things do count, however insignificant they seem at the time." **Nicola Simpson, Unley High School, SA**

"Perhaps it can be said that not only environmental aims but much more had been learnt through the conference, that it's not too late to make a difference, that quite simply we can make a difference and we must make a difference. The future is ours, only by working together and with continual radical and new approaches can we ensure our future is one we can look forward to." **Dianne Rodger, Loop Students Newspaper**

"The enthusiasm of youth was never more evident than it was last night when the outstanding success of the 2001 MDBC International River Health Conference was celebrated with a huge finale." **Bree Rayfield, Sunraysia Daily**

"It should go for longer, I thought the Conference was very special because we learnt from other children, not teachers." **Samantha Pole, Mildura South Primary School**

"... thanks for a wonderful experience at the River Health Conference. We thought it was really cool and we had a really good time. It was very well organised and the

workshops were interesting and educational. We had a fantastic time and told everyone at school about it, especially the part about kids being the teachers. It has made us realise that little things help and that even though we are kids, we can still do something for the environment." **Mildura South Primary School students**

"The environment has been my passion for most of my life and this Conference has only increased it! The Conference made me realise I'm not alone in what I'm trying to do. Well done and thanks for running such a huge Conference." **Amy Beal, Urrbrae Agricultural High School**

"The Conference showed me that if everybody does a little bit, the world will be a better place." **Hannah Valentine, Ravenswood, Sydney**

"Dear Murray-Darling Basin Commission. The year is 2020 and I have just been for my annual check up. I am writing to report that thanks to the revegetation along my banks and the fact that I have removed salt and nutrients (surplus to my requirements) from my diet, my doctor is thrilled with my recovery. Threatened species have returned to my flow and I feel wonderful. My lower reaches are grateful for the flow of healthy salt reduced water. SA was dying before, now I am restored. Thanks to the vision of the students from the International River Health Conference in 2001. From Mrs Murray River." **Anon, written during the Conference Reflection and Recommendations Session**

"The 2001 MDBC River Health Conference has been amazing! I have had a wonderful time and I know I will cherish my memories from this Conference forever. I think the state of our river is a huge concern for Australia and it worries me that no Government Officials or politicians took the time to be a part of this Conference." **Emma Porter, Year 9, Unley High School, SA**

At this stage organisers are seeking sponsors for the event to run again in 2003.

For more information, contact:

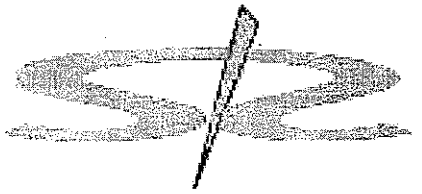
Firestarter
COMMUNICATIONS

PO Box 321
Mildura Vic 3502
Phone: 0438 269 369
Fax: 03 5023 0899

See also:
<http://www.riverhealth.com>



Refugee Forum 2001



On Monday 19th November, approximately fifty parents, students and staff met at Sydney Road Community School in Brunswick, Victoria for an evening of discussion about the plight of refugees in Australia. The event was primarily organised by a committed group of Year 11 students who, after covering the topic as part of their studies in VCE English, felt both angry and frustrated at the apparent lack of sympathy displayed by Australian society in the main. These students were able to translate these strong feelings into something positive on several fronts by negotiating to meet the oral communication requirements in Unit 2 VCE English through organising and participating in the forum.

The idea for the forum first came out of student interest in doing something practical about this particular issue. At first it was hoped that they could organise a trip to one of the detention centres. When it became apparent that this suggestion could not so easily be worked into the school curriculum, the idea for a community information night arose and the enthusiasm quickly grew.

Many students had an active role in organising the forum. This ranged from contacting potential speakers and organising what specific topics would be addressed, to preparing promotional flyers and pamphlets, contacting parents and other students, along with setting up the venue on the evening itself.

Prior to the evening, senior students visited junior classes to promote the forum. During these visits, the Year 11 students explained

to their younger peers why they thought the issue was so important and what they hoped to achieve. It was evident during these discussions that the opinions of older students held more weight than those of their teachers' for the younger students. It seemed that a fellow student brought authenticity to points of view that a teacher might be seen to hold as a matter of course.

An impressive list of guest speakers was organised for the forum. They were Pamela Curr – recent Greens candidate for the federal seat of Melbourne, Michelle Harmer – from the Foundation For Victims of Torture, and John O'Leary – a social worker currently assisting refugees in the community. John's son Sean is a current student at Sydney Road. Several student speakers took the opportunity to express their own points of view and

joined these speakers. VCE English teacher Tony Rogers assessed these student speakers according to the prescribed outcomes for the oral work requirement and this went towards their VCE English unit. He observed that student engagement

was markedly increased. "Many students ended up doing far more work than they would have otherwise for this task because they were interested in the issue and knew it had to be done properly."

Following these speakers was an open discussion around some of the issues raised. One of the most articulate and passionate contributors was Year 7 student Oisin Duke. His enthusiastic contribution was a further reminder that young people are well capable of developing and defending intelligent and worthwhile opinions.

There were a number of positives to be taken from the forum. Most obviously, the opportunity for members of the school community to come together and share their views and concerns was of great benefit. Many at the forum claimed to feel comforted in the knowledge that others shared their views and better equipped to state their case in a broader forum following the night's discussion. Others said that they hadn't really known much about refugees and hearing the discussion had changed their mind.

Also, there was value in the school community coming together in a manner that seriously valued all members equally, apart from their respective roles in the day to day running of the school. The fact that students were the principal instigators in the event taking place provided those involved with an enhanced sense of self worth, confidence and achievement. Importantly, they demonstrated that students are able to undertake active roles of real importance in the community.

Building on the success of the Refugee Forum, Sydney Road Community School intends to hold similar events in the future.

Ralph Gotlib

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An inclusive approach to youth participation: involving culturally and linguistically diverse young people

Within our society, young people are generally not encouraged to actively participate or engage in processes of decision-making in community life. For young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, a range of issues compound their ability to participate in decision-making processes. These include the immigration and resettlement process itself, language and communication barriers, poor knowledge of the Australian system and mainstream service systems generally not being culturally responsive.

Processes which include young people in decision-making, both through their local communities and political processes at local, state and national levels must be developed in partnership with CLD young people themselves. The consultative process with CLD communities often results in an adult perception of the communities which is not an accurate reflection of the lives and priorities of CLD young people's needs. This will often result in CLD young people's input and participation being tokenistic or negated.

different or enhanced mechanisms are required to involve them in participatory processes. The degrees to which young people are seen as independent thinkers, capable and deserving of a greater degree of participation, varies considerably with social class, culture and gender. Young people in general are extremely busy with study, work or mutual obligation activities. For many disadvantaged young people, attempting to survive day-by-day is, of course, a priority over and above involvement in participatory and

the decision-making process is to ensure that the process is structured and linked to an existing group or organisation which can provide support roles to CLD young people on an ongoing basis. Adequate lead-time is vital to allow for preparation and debriefing.

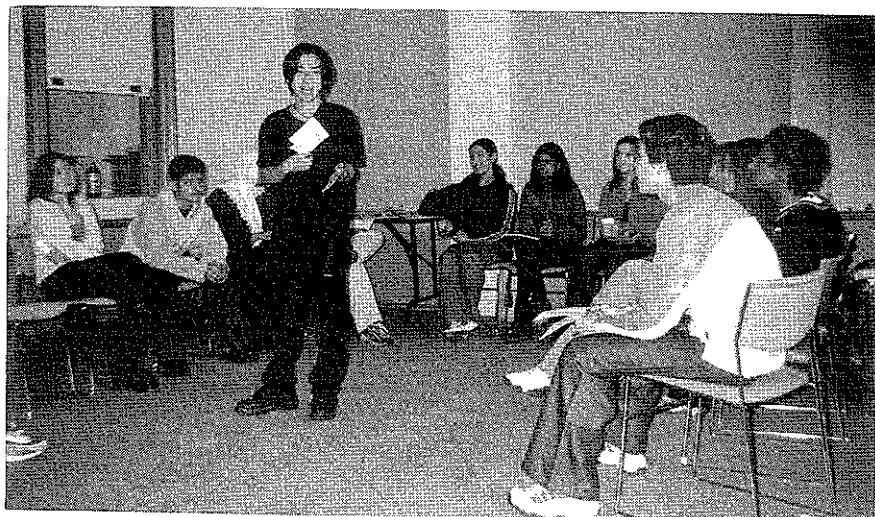
Information must be provided about processes and services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Time must be spent in educating young people about political systems, management structures and consultation methods. Refugee young people have fled countries where political systems are dictatorial and people are persecuted for speaking out against government. For these young people, more time and resources must be provided for them to feel comfortable about participating in political processes and services. Currently there are limited examples of models in the youth service system, that effectively involve young people in decision-making processes.

The Centre for Multicultural for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) in Victoria is concerned with developing and running participation initiatives which are inclusive of culturally and linguistically diverse young people. CMYI also documents best practice youth participation initiatives for this target group.

Statewide Leadership Program for migrant and refugee young people

In September this year, CMYI piloted a youth leadership program for migrant and refugee young people, in partnership with the Visyares Centre, Australian Red Cross and representatives of local government youth services. Funding for the pilot was secured through the Australian Multicultural Foundation.

Students were recruited from seven schools across Melbourne with



Young people from CLD communities bring with them a diversity of understanding about participation from a variety of cultural contexts. Citizenship is about community connectedness. Some CLD young people have often lost a sense of belonging and trust to a community and consequently

consultation processes. Newly arrived young people in the initial stage of resettlement may not wish to be involved due to the more immediate concerns of language acquisition, housing, income family issues and acculturation.

The most effective avenue for engaging CLD young people in

high numbers of migrant and refugee young people: Banksia Secondary College, Moreland City Secondary College, Broadmeadows Secondary College, St Albans Secondary College, Chandler Secondary College, Westall Secondary College and Carwatha College. Year 10 co-ordinators were asked to nominate four students either currently involved in leadership activities or those with leadership potential to participate in the week-long program.

The modules covered in the program were developed from the Australian Red Cross Community Leadership Manual with modification to cater for the newly arrived young people in the group.

The aim of the course was to equip students with leadership skills they can utilise in their schools and communities, and to link them in with youth participation activities in their local areas through local government or community-based youth services. It must be recognised, however, that participation is valuable in itself and need not be linked to outcomes.

Alongside CMYI and Visycares staff, workers from the City of Greater Dandenong, City of Kingston and the Red Cross Youth Program Department assisted in facilitation of the program. The key facilitator was Nawel Taha, an 18 year old CMYI youth participation worker who has been trained up in prior youth involvement activities.

The leadership program will be offered annually, with next year's program linking the participants more strongly back in to their local areas through community action projects planned from the outset with local government youth services. The Centre aims to run future programs with a range of groups of young people, not all attached to school. From these programs, we hope to further develop a network of migrant and refugee young leaders who can act as spokespeople on CLD youth issues and become involved in forums and other events.

Sue Drummond

Community Project Officer

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THE LEADERSHIP COURSE

The leadership course was held for the youth of Melbourne. This course was a beneficial course to all of us because it was a multicultural program. All the youth that attended this program were immigrants from other countries. Our self-esteem was very low at first but by attending this course we are now motivated and they have inspired us greatly.

During the course we got to meet many different people who spoke to us about their lives and their achievements. They were also immigrants like us. We learnt that we should strive for our goals and nothing should stop us from doing anything. All the youth bonded very well because we played lots of games together and we did a lot of teamwork. We also got the privilege to meet the Minister of Youth Affairs. We got to ask him questions and we also got to express our youth issues and views to him.

This program is essential for us, the youth, because it now has changed all of us who attended this lovely program. We are now very positive and self motivated. We were thought to have some leadership skills and therefore we are now skilled and we will pass on our skills to the youth in our suburbs and schools.



The course was held at different venues every day, so we all met at Flinders Street Station every morning and from there we took a walk to the venue. We were served with lunch every alternate day. During the course we were grouped and we were given lots of tasks to do. We also had a debate that was very successful and in this way it gave us all a chance to express our views on certain topics. At the end of the course we had to prepare a skit on what we had learnt for the graduation that was held on the last day. The last and final day had come and it was the graduation day. We all had presented our skits with enthusiasm. After that we were presented with certificates.

On the last day it was very sad to leave everyone. Through the course we all felt like one family. Everyone was happy because we had the opportunity to be part of such a wonderful program but we were sad at the same time because it had come to the end. We all did not want to leave because we felt that this course was very inspiring and joyful. It was very beneficial to us as youth because it has given us a chance to express our feelings as young people and also we expressed all the problems that we are facing as new citizens to Australia. We now have learnt how we can cope with those problems and we can now teach others in our communities about what we have learnt and also how to cope with the problems that we were facing. We can also help our communities and carry out our leadership skills and teach it to others. We would like to thank every one that was involved in this course and we also would like them to know that we have benefited greatly and we would do anything to help in our communities or youth issues.

Shakti, Kim Sor, Rumes, Semra
Westall Secondary College

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues is a statewide community based organisation that aims to strengthen and build innovative partnerships between young people, support services and the community to enhance life opportunities for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds living in Victoria, Australia. The centre has a priority focus on young people from refugee and newly arrived communities.

Originally established in 1988 as the Ethnic Youth Issues Network (EYIN), the organisation was renamed the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) in 2000 to coincide with a change of auspice to the Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF). CMYI receives core funding from the Victorian Office for Youth as well as state and federal funding for specific initiatives and innovative programs.

The CMYI represents a range of individuals and organisations from CLD communities, government and non-government organisations with a commitment to improving the social and personal status of young people from CLD backgrounds.

Programs and Special Projects

CMYI undertakes a range of programs and special projects designed to provide culturally appropriate services to refugee and newly arrived young people.

The Refugee Youth Pathways Program provides information and support services to 'at risk' refugee and newly arrived young people aged 15 to 21. The program is designed to enable young people to access pathways to education, training and employment opportunities. Program workers are based in Noble Park, Maribyrnong and Brunswick.

The Reconnect Young Refugee's Program provides an early intervention service for refugee young people aged 12 to 18 who have recently left home or are at risk of homelessness. Combining service provision with community development strategies, the program aims to improve the level of engagement of young people with family, work, education, training and the community. The program incorporates action research with family centred approaches and culturally appropriate service delivery. The program is based in the Cities of Greater Dandenong and Hume.

The Multicultural Sport and Recreation Project is a state wide project that aims to increase the sport and recreation opportunities for young people from newly arrived and CLD communities by mapping existing opportunities, barriers and establishing models of good practice. Initiatives will be developed and implemented in partnership with organisations from the sport, youth, migrant, and government sectors.

Involving Young People

CMYI is concerned with developing and running youth participation initiatives which are inclusive of culturally and linguistically diverse young people. CMYI also documents best practice youth participation initiatives for this target group. A key CMYI strategy for youth participation includes an annual youth leadership program for migrant and refugee young people, run in partnership with schools, local government and community based agencies. Participants in CMYI youth participation programs also become involved in CMYI policy activities and are supportively linked to other relevant youth participation initiatives on local, state and national level.

CMYI resources and previous projects...

Publications:

- 'Landing On Your Feet:' important legal information for newly arrived young people;
- 'Young people who are asylum seekers in Australia:' a guide for workers;
- 'Understanding the Victorian Education System:' educational resource;
- 'Navigating their journey:' a guide for workers with Sudanese young people;
- 'Sport: creating a level playing field:' increasing the participation of young people from ethnic communities in sport;
- 'Ethnic Youth Gangs:' do they exist? A research report;
- 'Developing best practice drug and alcohol treatment service and support models:' for young people of Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese origin.

Training and Education Resources:

- 'Faces of young Australia' poster and photographic exhibition
- 'Given a Chance' a video training manual on working with refugee young people
- 'Sex, Living and Dying' sexual health information resource (audio tape)

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Productive Learning: Writing and Publishing

For many years, I have been advocating strongly for curriculum approaches in which students produce something that is useful to others - that makes a difference beyond the classroom - as part of their learning. **Connect** has publicised examples of primary and secondary students writing books, making radio programs, conducting community research, documenting oral histories, producing community manuals or newspapers and so on.

As part of my work at the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, I also teach within the pre-service teacher training program - for DipEd and BTeach students - in a compulsory subject called *Education Policy, Schools and Society*. For the last few years I have taught there in fairly traditional ways: a lecture on Civics and Citizenship Education policy, a weekly seminar group for one semester, asking students to produce one or two formal essays at the end of the course to demonstrate their learning.

This year, I proposed that we do something different. In line with my interest in 'productive learning and outcomes' (or 'authentic assessment'), and encouraged to 'put my practice where my mouth was', I suggested to the students undertaking the subject that we form a seminar group that would produce something - object and process unknown - that would be useful to others beyond the course.

Though **Connect** has generally avoided reporting issues of student participation within tertiary education (not because they're not important, but rather because they are issues that could/should be canvassed in other areas ... **Connect** is focused firmly on primary and secondary education), I feel there are lessons emerging, as I reflect on a semester's experience, that might be valuable in other areas of education.

The Process

I had initial concerns about being able to 'sell' such an idea to an existing randomly formed seminar group. In the past, it had taken much discussion to reach agreement about relatively small pedagogical changes, and with such a short time line - nine weeks of

a weekly two and a half hour seminar - I feared we might still be debating even basic processes by the end! So I circulated a proposal to form such an 'applied seminar group' to all 700 students enrolled in the subject. The response was strong and positive. Many had queries which I couldn't answer: what would we do? how much extra time would be required? I answered that we would make these decisions together. In the end, other subject commitments narrowed down the group, particularly as we specified a seminar time - Wednesday mornings - that meant that some interested students had clashes with other subjects. But we finished up with a group of 30 students who committed themselves to an uncertain journey.

Over the nine weeks of seminars, we argued, disagreed, agreed, formed small groups, allocated tasks and thrashed out what we would do and how we would go about it. And argued a lot about process, and how we would work as a whole group. We decided (well, it took about two weeks) that we would produce a book that would be useful for and read by those entering policy formation and implementation processes in schools: beginning teachers, parents, students, current teachers etc. Ten small teams (of two to four students) each took on a topic area of the course - gender, post-compulsory education, Indigenous education and so on - and undertook to write a chapter around that topic.

At the same time, we wanted to maintain a broad focus for all students on all the issues in the course (not allowing anyone to totally 'specialise' and ignore some

areas) and so divided each week's seminar into 'business' and 'content' components, with each small group responsible for initiating and presenting a brief session on their topic area. In practice, the decision-making process constantly threatened to take over the available time, and we had to be quite disciplined in ensuring that there was a commitment to 'content time'.

Each group produced chapter drafts. These were copied (by the students) and circulated to others who had agreed to read and comment - initially print copies, then, as we set up an e-mail network between the students, electronically (some learnt how to insert and track changes); and then (when threatened by a virus), one student set up a web site and undertook the massive task of putting drafts on this. (She negotiated credit for this with another subject within the course.) Drafts were attacked, praised, suggestions made. Further drafts were produced. As a class, we set deadlines (which were generally adhered to ... roughly) for writing. Some groups produced up to six drafts for circulation before being happy with the final result.

At the same time, each of the small groups undertook organisational tasks. We brainstormed what we thought would be needed: raising funds to print the book; developing and maintaining a web version of the book; getting printing quotes; organising a launch; publicising the book; editing the final copy for consistency; doing the layout; and so on. Some groups had to start their tasks early, while others could only start once the writing was completed.

And there were some critical decisions that everyone wanted to share in: the title of the book, and the cover illustration. While some tasks could be totally entrusted to a small team, everyone wanted to decide on these overall issues. The title (and subtitle) caused more anguish and argument than almost anything else, with proposal and counter-proposal, and strong (and loud) voices, and finally an exhaustive series of elimination votes that produced a title

that no-one was really 'over the moon' about, but everyone (apparently) was willing to accept.

It was a long and often difficult process. But finally a book was produced: **Policy is not a dirty word**: 10 chapters, 76 pages, everyone in print. It was launched at the end of November to much amazement, excitement and congratulations - including from the Department Head (who launched it) and the Faculty Dean. One of the students wrote a song - *The Policy Blues* - and a group of the students (musicians as well as trainee teachers) learnt it and sang it at the launch.

The chapters in the book, and individual pieces of writing reflecting on the process and on learnings about policy formation and social impacts on schooling, became the assessable outcomes of the subject.

Reflections

Standing here at the end of the project, I feel both pride and (still) excitement. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching this seminar group.

My role had many aspects and shifted (often unexpectedly) from week to week. I often chaired discussions (though sometimes students did that), usually pushed around deadlines (keeping to decisions), worked to maintain motivation (sometimes feeling like the coach at three quarter time), insisted on process and inclusion (sometimes students alerted the whole group to the danger of dominant voices) and put in my fair share of 'teaching' - information giving, suggesting resources, feeding back on chapter drafts, asking difficult questions. It was a balance between addressing course content and objectives, and group process.

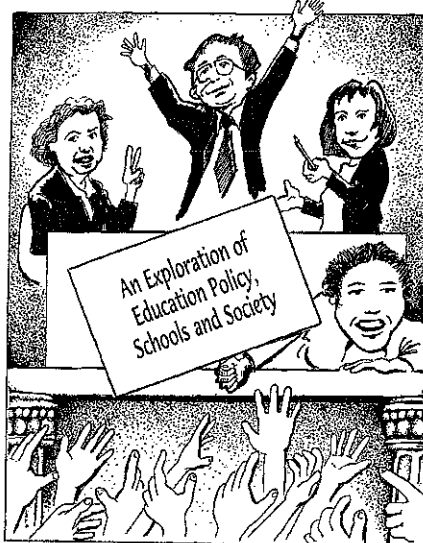
It was important to me to maintain an intellectual presence. We were negotiating content and processes, and establishing strong 'ownership' of what we were doing by the group; but that didn't mean I could/should stand back and deny that I had any role. I was a co-learner, just as they were co-teachers. I was part of the process and brought knowledge, skills and experience to it ... and didn't resile from 'leaping in', but within ground rules that insisted that I was listened to because of what I had to say (as we all were), rather than because of who I was.

I worried (and still do) that the process of group decision-making

became the dominant learning experience rather than the subject's curriculum of policy and social issues. When I do this again (not if) I think I want to push for a more hard-edged and structured engagement with the subject's issues. I'm thinking at this stage that each group should have been asked to formally present a draft of their chapter to the whole class (rather than run an 'engaging' activity around their topic), and the whole class encouraged to deal seriously with the topic, tear the draft apart, suggest changes and ideas.

Maybe this would have been even more stressful for participants (me as well as students). One student's reflection affectionately entitled seminars as 'Bloodbath 101'. In students' reflections, the third most frequent word (after 'a' and 'the') seemed to be 'frustrating' ... but it was a productive frustration, that forced us to deal with how to write together and how to understand important topics.

Policy is not a dirty word ...



Applied Education Policy Seminar Group

Some students also suggested running formal classes on group processes: how to work in small teams, how to operate as a whole group, how to write collaboratively. Maybe. But I suspect that having such classes as a response to emerging needs, was probably the best way to go - even though we didn't do such classes very formally.

The short time line was a real limitation but, at the same time, a positive challenge. We set a date for a launch, publicised it, and knew we

had to keep to it. That was useful in structuring deadlines as we worked backwards: when would we need books printed, when did they have to go to the printer, what did that mean for final deadlines? My experience with publishing **Connect** gave me an idea both of the overall process and also of the time that steps would take.

In the end, I think I did more work on the layout than I would have liked. Faced with tight deadlines, and a layout group with no previous experience in Pagemaker, I suggested that I do the hands-on work but at their direction. That actually meant that we got it done (courtesy of a couple of late night sessions), but it limited their skill development.

Feedback

The students are very proud of both their product and of the process that led them to it. Their reflections talk of understanding the clear links between policy development processes and what they went through: searching for evidence, understanding principles, recognising values, compromising. A couple wrote:

"It is possible for a group of people to work together in disharmony to produce a result that is ultimately pretty damn good. And most of us are happy to settle for that."

"Many of us are hoping to teach and promote techniques and methods of communication on which we feel strongly in favour, but which we are only beginning to incorporate into our own way of being... I have thoroughly enjoyed the debating, laughing and sometimes near crying of the process, and am inspired to see that the world is still home to people with ideals and dreams for a fair and just community and the will to work towards making that a reality."

The students take away copies of, for many, their first published work - a huge plus for their teaching job applications. Hopefully they will take away ideas of process and pedagogy that fit them better for staffroom and classroom - and perhaps encourage them to try similar approaches within their own teaching.

And me ... I take away excitement and pride too, reinforcement of my commitment to this form of learning, and friendships with an amazing and competent group of teachers entering the profession.

Roger Holdsworth

Copies of 'Policy is not a dirty word' are available from the Youth Research Centre for \$11: (03) 8344 9633

A Community Problem-Solving Activity

In 2001, the Gresswell Cluster Junior School Council (JSC) Network (in Melbourne's northern suburbs) has had a focus on 'solving problems'. The year started with Peer Mediation training for students from several of the Network's 11 schools. These students then became an integral part of a Student Forum around the theme 'solving problems in our schools' (see **Connect** 128, April 2001).

In term 3, it was decided to expand this focus, to look at problem solving in a community context. After talking with students from the JSCs, we negotiated with Northland Shopping Centre to carry out some research there. We wanted to see what problems existed for shop keepers, and how people solved them.

Preparing

We started by brainstorming possible questions in the individual schools. JSCs met and talked about the sort of questions we could ask. While some students wanted to find out about what working in the shops was like, others wanted to know whether certain things - the GST, shoplifting, smoking and so on - were problems. All the questions were compiled together into one short survey. The first questions asked about the background of the store - what it sold etc; then store managers were asked about several possible issues - how big a problem were they? - what were the consequences of the major problems? The next set of questions - the most important ones - asked how people solved their major problems. This survey had to be approved by the Shopping Centre management before they would give permission for us to do the research there; it also had to be approved by the students and teachers in the schools taking part. There were no problems with this.

So a Student Forum day was set. In the week before the Forum,

we let all the stores that we planned to visit, know we were coming, and asked if they were willing to take part. The Centre Management suggested some specific places and gave us names; in other cases, we just approached the store manager, described the research and asked for permission. Most people were very happy for students to talk with them (as long as they weren't busy at the time), and we had a list of about 50 stores. This preparation took most of a day to arrange.

The Forum

For the Student Forum, we had 50 surveys run off, maps marked and 10 school teams organised. We met (as usual) at Northland Secondary College, which is just next to the Centre and, after a brief introduction about who to contact and how, broke up into school-based research teams. Each team had four to six students and a teacher from that school, and a list of five stores to visit. Off they went, and each spent about an hour finding and interviewing store managers.

When the teams came back to the Secondary College, they had to analyse their results. They did this by adding up their teams' responses to each question, and then transferring these results to big bar-graph sheets using coloured stick-on dots, so all the teams' results could be collected together. The written comments about each issue were put onto post-it notes and stuck to the

graphs. Then each student research team took two of the questions, looked at the graphed results and wrote up what they observed - how big a problem it was, the consequences of this problem, and how stores dealt with it. Each group then began classifying the solutions as: 'ignore it', 'prevent it', 'get someone else to deal with it', 'confront it' or 'negotiate a solution'. But at that point we ran out of time, and schools were asked to follow this up within their own JSC meetings.

Presenting the Results

Finally, a representative of the Store Management came to the Student Forum and the student research team presented their results and some recommendations to her.

It was a successful but very busy morning. We probably tried to do too much, and it was suggested that this activity might have been better as a full day Student Forum activity.

Students said that they learnt about how shopkeepers do their jobs, how they solve problems and how they deal with difficult situations. The best part, they said, was the visit to the Shopping Centre and "learning about how people outside our school solve problems". They also talked about ways of taking these lessons back to their schools to help JSCs solve problems and deal with difficulties around the school.

For more information, contact:

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phone: (03) 9484 1544

or

Carol Humphreys

Reservoir East Primary School
Boldrewood Parade, Reservoir 3073
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PASTA NEWSLETTER

26 - December 2001

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

What did you achieve this year in the way of creating opportunities for the voice of students to be heard? How many times did you set up plans and diary dates only to find that none of it worked out? How do you start something when you are not at the beginning? PASTA's plan for a professional development opportunity for NSW teacher advisers in second semester was a bit like that. In our efforts to settle on an interesting program we had to go back to basics and ask: "What do teachers who lead student leadership groups really want?" And well might you ask, in this year of the volunteer, why bother anyway?

My interest in Student Representative Councils (SRC) and their Teacher Advisers comes from my community experience where representatives, advocates, administrators and leaders are in great demand in all sorts of voluntary and work situations. Most students can be taught these roles which are valued in the community and will help them to be successful in their career and personal life. I believe Student Representative Councils and Student Leadership courses are good vehicles for teaching these skills.

So after much talking, NSW DET and PASTA representatives agreed upon a Needs Assessment of Teacher Advisers in New South Wales High Schools. Survey questions were mailed out to a random selection

of High Schools. In addition, a phone poll of selected groups, using some of the same questions was carried out. A date was set for a combined working party to analyse the results and plan for the future. We'll let you know what teachers had to say.

In the future, PASTA wants to see Leadership taught as part of the NSW High School curriculum, although not necessarily under the umbrella of the new Civics and Citizenship curriculum or HSIE. PASTA wants to see SRC Teacher Advisers recognised professionally, academically, financially for the leadership training they do at present as unrecognised volunteers. PASTA representatives want to walk away from the meeting on December 7th with a positive plan for working with the NSW DET Welfare Unit on professional and curriculum development for SRC Teacher Advisers in 2002, which also gives opportunity in the New Year for the voice of student representatives to be heard.

Happy Christmas.



Jeanne Bow
President, PASTA Inc.

**FOR MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT DETAILS:
SEE THE PASTA WEBSITE**

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

- PASTA Memberships and Professional Development Activities: bowtech@ozemail.com.au
- OVERSEAS TOURS (for advisers and students): suepage@ozemail.com.au
- CSC AWARDS (Community Service Certificate Program): RalphMurray@bigpond.com.au
- ISRC, International Linkages and Projects: asamson@wesley.usyd.edu.au
- Website and Independent/Systemic Schools: ckingston@interact.net.au

ABN 49 398 096 539

PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION SUPPORT NEEDS

Source: Professional Association of SRC Teacher / Advisers (PASTA) - Australia

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

So that PASTA and other educational organisations can assist you and our mutual efforts on behalf of better student and adviser leadership and representation, please spend a few minutes of your time to complete this needs assessment.

Post your responses to PASTA c/ 12 Dyson Drive NORAH HEAD NSW 2263.

If preferred, request an email version for reply c/ charleskingston@ozemail.com.au or suepage@ozemail.com.au

A summary of these results - and similar assessments from different audiences - will appear in a future issue.

Thanks for taking the time to provide this information and for the vital work you do supporting student participation.

Information such as your Name, your School, Department or other Institution or Group, your Position within your School, Department or Group, your Contact Details (include e-mail if possible), age range of students catered for in your school/group, total enrolment/numbers in school, system or group, size/representation of SRC/SLC or other Leadership Group(s) within the above, and your Location/Demographics of School or Group (eg Rural/Urban/Suburban) would be appreciated.

SECTION A:

NOW AND FUTURE QUESTIONS

1. Have you, previous to this, heard of PASTA Inc (Professional Association of SRC Teacher Advisers)? If so, where/how?
2. Have you or any member of your staff, student body, department or leadership group participated in any PASTA activity? If Yes, how?
3. Does your school or group subscribe to **Connect**?
4. What support do you think SRC (or SLC, Leadership Team, etc) Teacher Advisers would find most useful from PASTA and/or from state educational departments? Think in terms of urgent priorities that should be developed over the next five years? *(If possible, please rank in order from the most useful to the least useful.)*
 - a SRC teacher adviser network meetings
 - b Networks via electronic communication
 - c Statewide training courses on specific issues
 - d Accessing information via a website for SRC teacher advisers
 - e District based training and development
 - f School based resource materials for use within student welfare team
 - g Bulletin/newsletter
5. What other kinds of support - from all sources - could SRC/SLC Teacher Advisers and Leadership Activity Groups use in order to effectively carry out their roles. Where relevant, please indicate the desired source (eg Students, Principals, P&C, Community Groups, Parliamentarians, Local Councils, Business, Media, Unions etc)?
6. What do you see as the present role SRCs and similar bodies have in most schools?
7. In what ways do you see the role of these groups changing over the next five years?
8. What do you think schools and associated groups should do to further develop the leadership potential of their student representatives?
9. What do you think schools should do to develop the leadership potential of all students?
10. What is the current role of the SRC/SLC or other Teacher Advisers in your school(s)?
11. How do you see the role of these advisers changing in the next five years?

SECTION B:

YOUR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

12. What student leadership programs exist in your school or organisation and how do they relate to each other? (eg SRC/SLC with Captains/Prefects, School Council Reps etc)

13. How are teachers/advisers involved in student leadership activities selected? (Volunteers? Appointed? Elected? By students? Other?) Could you also estimate the number of years they have held their positions?
14. Are you aware of any training in student leadership support undergone by each of the Student Leadership Advisers? If yes, please indicate nature of training.
15. Does your school provide training opportunities for your student representatives? If so, please describe purposes, timing, duration, type (eg two-day Orientation camp outside school near beginning of school year ... etc)
16. Are you (or your adviser) given a concessional period allowance? If so, in what form is the allowance given?
17. Does your school provide a timetabled period for SRC meetings?
18. How often does your SRC meet?
19. Please rank in order from 1 to 10 to indicate the degree of involvement of your SRC/SLC etc in the following activities (1 is the heaviest involvement, 9 is the least):
 - a Orientation workshop
 - b General leadership skills
 - c Specific projects training
 - d (Near) End of the year as evaluation
 - e Student welfare projects to help students across the school
 - f Mainly ceremonial in nature
 - g Mainly fundraising
 - h Involved in representative ways in school decision-making
 - i Other
20. Please indicate the how and to what degree your leadership group is involved in the day to day activities of the school.

SECTION C: INTER-SCHOOLS INVOLVEMENT AND DISTRICT

21. Does your SRC/SLC etc work with other schools? If Yes, how?
22. ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS SURVEY?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION AND FOR THE VITAL WORK THAT YOU ARE DOING WHEN YOU SUPPORT STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP.

What does membership of PASTA offer you?

- Positive support for SRC teacher advisers;
 - Practical workshop ideas for use in schools;
 - Regular seminars, workshops and conferences at an Association, State and National level at reduced registration rates;
 - Regular newsletter and journals including annual subscription to **Connect** and optional access to NASC's **Leadership for Student Activities**;
 - Training and development within the SRC area;
 - A support network for SRC advisers;
 - Access to SRC networks;
 - Special resources for students and teachers;
 - Opportunities to be involved in discussions on the future of SRCs at all levels;
 - Attendance at open meetings of PASTA which are held at the Joint Council Buildings, Corner Marion and Norton Streets, Leichhardt, NSW.
- Phone: (02) 9564 3322; Fax: (02) 9564 2342

Mail subscriptions to:

PASTA Inc., c/- 12 Dyson Drive, Norah Head NSW 2263

SEPTEMBER 11

The following letter is from a Year 11 student at Manly High School in New South Wales. James was one of the delegates on the 2001 North American tour.

Dear Ralph, Amie, and the youth of the world.

I have sat here over the past month and a half and watched hundreds of emails pour into my inbox from people at home and abroad regarding the events of September 11th. I sat here reading the many points of views that have been expressed by different people: the view that America brought upon itself what happened; the view that, while tragic, the tragedy was just a media hyped version of things that occur on a regular basis in third world countries; the view that, while what was done is wrong, that going to war against the people that did it is to commit an act of terrorism in itself; and the view that these people should be completely destroyed no matter what the cost. It is in no way my place to sit here and try and impose my opinion on others or to criticise the opinions of others, but as someone who not only knew people that died in the WTC but also spent quite a bit of time living in New York over the past few years, Ralph's e-mail made me realise something that I had not yet come to terms with.

Since September 11 there has been a lot of discussion over what the true purpose of the terrorist attacks was. Many say it was a direct attack on the US government, military, economy and the people of the USA. Many say it was an attack on the American and indeed western way of life, an attack on freedom and liberty. And many say it was a combination of all of the above. But I have also been thinking of more long term, more distant targets. The definition of a terrorist is "someone who inflicts terror" or fear, and it is this infliction of fear that has caused events such as ISRC 2002 to be postponed or cancelled. This is in no way an attack on Ralph's decision to change his ideas for the conference. There is no way he can be expected to carry the

responsibility of hundreds of lives during war time, and his proposed multi-region conferences are an excellent substitute for what obviously cannot be.

But it is not just our small youth conference that has been affected in this way. The recent APEC summit was held under incredible security measures, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference was postponed (for the Americans, that is a meeting for all of us who are still under the control of the Queen). The WTO meeting scheduled to be held in Qatar looks likely to be moved as it is also an Arab state. And it was the creation of fear which led to complications in events such as these that I believe was also a major aim for the terrorists, and so far, the only aim in which they have succeeded.

The American government and military, the strongest in the world, are hitting the terrorists where it hurts, the economy is down but it will go up eventually, the people of America are stronger than ever before, these events only fuelling their patriotism and the western world is still free. In all of those objectives, these people failed. But in the one objective, to create fear and terror throughout the world, they have succeeded, and will continue to succeed as long as they are alive and probably long after they are gone. For we can rebuild buildings, we can check bags before we go on aeroplanes and we can bomb an entire city until it is flattened, but we cannot and will not ever be able to stop ourselves from being afraid of what might happen.

I hope one day to see you all again when the world is at peace, but it seems as if that day is a long time coming.

James Windfield

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.

What has become of our schools today?

What has become of our schools today? We are still learning subjects which haven't evolved for hundreds or years, our teaching techniques are antiquated, and we still believe that rote learning is the way to go in most subjects. Is this producing a generation of followers not leaders? Is this producing a generation where people know more, but are unable to learn more because they are taught by rote only? Is this the future we want for tomorrow?

In this century, more so than ever before, we are facing the problems of a rapidly evolving and changing society, in which change is becoming part of everyday life. In the past ten years, we have seen the growth of information technology and major advances in health and government policies. Have these advances been reflected in our schools? Have schools changed as much as the world around them?

The answer to that question, simply put, is 'no'; we are faced with an education system which hasn't changed much in the past five decades. Apart from the introduction of computers, there has been no structural change in the way we teach, what we teach and for whom we teach. The same style classrooms, teaching methods and ideas of at least two centuries previous. In today's world, where people who can communicate, adapt and evolve to change, are more employable and valuable than people who have a set boundary or knowledge, shouldn't our schools start to reflect this? In an environment where, for the first time in decades, federal public funding to public schools (which cater for 74% of students) is 34% of the education budget. And for the first time in Australia's history ever, in the 2002-2003 budget predictions, federal private school funding will be greater than total federal university funding. Shouldn't we start thinking about change before it is too late?

The environment of the world today is such that people get jobs, not because they have the information or the knowledge, but because they have the ability to adapt, learn new skills and apply these skills to things they do. This, coupled with excellent communication skills, is providing the leaders of tomorrow. Ironically, Australia has less business, political, economic and non-sports leaders identifiable by general population than any other OECD country. The United States, on the other hand, tops the charts. The US has encouraged student governance, leadership and advocacy roles for

young people. The US actively promotes and finances classes and programs designed around leadership, communications, student governance and applied knowledge. Should Australia consider looking down this road? Again, are we following with too little, too late?

We can see that the cultural value of things such as a student voice is nearly meaningless in Australia. I challenge you to name any school in Australia which has a class called 'leadership', or 'student governance'; a class where students do not sit in rows learning information which is to be outdated in months, but a class in which students learn to communicate, negotiate, run meetings, or deal with real life situations. I was once told on work experience that what I learnt in one meeting at a business council, was more valuable to me in real life skills than six months at school in a classroom. Shouldn't this mean that our schools should focus more on what business wants and needs? Shouldn't we focus more on key competencies? The chairman of America OnLine said to a leadership workshop in the US, that "you can be the smartest person in the world, and know everything you need to know, but it is worth nothing if you cannot communicate it to others."

It is on this point that I wish to leave you today, and let you think about what schooling is, and in what direction we are heading. This is my final year ever in our secondary education system. In fact, I only have days to go. And yet the same questions still worry me. Why are sportsmanship and games valued more highly than leadership and student governance? Why does any one professional sport receive more government and non-government funding than all leadership and student governance activities in Australia? Why do we care more for sporting leaders than the ones who will run our country? Will we have to import the leaders of tomorrow? In addition, why is it that communication skills are still not taught, yet the algebraic formulas of centuries previous are inflicted on the youth of today? Why are we taught 'new things', for them to be outdated in less than a year, and why are we not taught to think, evolve, lead and develop, but rather to repeat, rote-learn and follow? Is this the future of Australia that we want?

Neil Pharoah

Fadden, ACT

<npharoah@pcug.org.au>

Leading the Students to Excitement and Adventure!

'Wet'n'Wild', 'Save Our Society' and 'Paralympics' are all part of student life at Frankston High School, thanks to the input of the Student Leadership Council (SLC). The Frankston HS SLC is a group of about 50 extremely motivated students from Years 7 to 12, who are seeking to make school life more exciting and enjoyable, while supporting many charities.

We represent the student body and address any problems or suggestions from the students in a positive manner, and attempt to help out wherever possible.

The year always begins with an SLC camp. This year we went to Shoreham and had an absolute ball! We began to develop our vital leadership skills, proposed new ideas and basically began to plan the activities for the year ahead. The camp is an important aspect of the Frankston HS SLC because it provides an opportunity for students to get to know each other, which is a very important factor if we intend to work to our full potential as a team.

This year, we separated our school terms into four categories. The first term was about 'School Spirit', where we encouraged students to make the most of their school life and enjoy their time while at school. A 'Wet'n'Wild' theme casual dress day included dance competitions, limbo, waterslides and a tropical dress code! All money raised was contributed to the swimming pool that the school intends to build in the near future.

The second term was devoted to 'Lively Yet Less Fortunate' people. We spent a lot of time organising activities and raising money for a girl named Jesse who lives in Mornington and was born with cerebral palsy. She cannot walk, so our aim (in conjunction with the Frankston Lions Club) was to raise money to buy her a special wheelchair that will make her life a whole lot easier and more worthwhile. We are also raising money for a beach wheelchair for the Frankston area, so that disabled people will be able to make the most of our beautiful beaches and enjoy them as much as the rest of us.

We conducted a 'Paralympics' casual dress day, with activities like three-legged races, blindfolded obstacle courses, crutches races and blindfolded

food-feeling games! The aim was to give the students an understanding of a life like Jesse's, but to do so in a positive manner that would encourage students to support people with disabilities. We also ran a sausage sizzle and a cake stall for the same cause.

The third term is all about 'Saving Our Environment'. We intend to run an 'SOS' (Save Our Society) day, where students will don their green apparel and take part in commando courses and the like. We will also be running:

- a warm food day, where we sell warm foods for environmental causes;
- an article in the newsletter every week, which will provide information about environmental issues and promote awareness;
- an environmental poem competition;
- videos at assemblies;
- a rubbish bin incentive to try and eliminate the litter around our school and the Frankston area.

The fourth term will be all about 'Celebrations', as the Year 12s come to the close of their schooling and other year levels prepare for holidays! We will be running exciting end of year activities for all year levels.

Not only does the SLC focus on running events around the schoolyard, we also have representatives on the School Council and on the Facilities, Uniform and Grounds Committees. These student representatives on various school committees provide an insight that is beneficial to all involved.

The Senior SLC meets each Thursday, and the Junior SLC meets on Fridays. At these meetings, we discuss and organise events, do general housekeeping work and try to act on any suggestions or recommendations from the student body. The whole SLC meets together about once a term to tie up all of the loose ends and make sure that everything is running smoothly.

We accomplish a lot each year, thanks to a dedicated team of hard-working students, intent on making school life fun and memorable, and helping out special charities.

Kimberley Gillan
Year 11, Frankston HS
Towerhill Road, Frankston 3199

Peer Drug Education Participation Program

Bellarine Secondary College is one of four public schools chosen for the Peer Drug Education Participation Program.

After attending the four day workshops in Melbourne (see *Connect* 132, page 26), our representatives came back enthusiastic about tackling drug education at our school. Bellarine Secondary College is a dual campus, so we thought we would try a different approach at the senior 9-12 campus, compared to the way it is tackled at the 7-8 campus. A decision was taken to have a meeting between the two campuses once every fortnight to share information.

Some of the suggestions that came up were:

- A comparison of the junior and senior campus surveys found that Drysdale students generally felt they were not informed enough about illegal drugs and want more education;
- A need for more education on alcohol and marijuana before Year 9;
- A feeling that the school wasn't firm enough on drugs at school, particularly smoking;
- More up-to-date videos and materials in the health curriculum;
- How to cope with family and friends on drugs.

One of the problem areas that we are trying to deal with is how to stop people smoking in the toilet blocks. We have decided to put up educational and deterrent signs and stickers (providing the School Council agrees). We are also writing to the Council

to see if we are allowed to make repeat offenders clean the area around the toilets of all cigarette butts and ash.

Another idea that was discussed was to involve students in a poster campaign by encouraging them to create imaginative posters to put up around the school to inform students about the effects of smoking around others.

The student committee would involve the teaching staff and the Campus Principal, Mr Sing, by consulting with them on any ideas before we go ahead. We have also surveyed each campus to find out whether students perceive our school to have a drug problem. If so, what can we do about it? We have also had some very good feedback.

We have been writing letters to the Health Curriculum Manager to see if we can have input on the Health course. We would like to send two students to a Health Key Learning Area (KLA) meeting to discuss some innovations to the Health Program. One of our opinions is to see if we can have a guest speaker before Year 9 to talk about the ill effects of drugs.

The students have enjoyed taking part in the Peer Drug Education Program and we will keep you updated.

Jack Gee
Bellarine Secondary College
Queenscliff Campus
King Street
Queenscliff 3225

Resource Materials on Active Citizenship

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Student Voice, Student Agency, Student Research

Student voice and democracy within education have been taken on as a global concern. Through encouraging students' voice, democracy is perceived to be enacted in the school and classroom. But how is this student voice achieved and how does this have a flow-on effect of creating democracy at a class and school level? This article will explore the work on a number of contemporary theories and case studies undertaken in Australia and the United Kingdom to discover school and teaching methodologies for the implementation of programs that give students voice and foster democratic education.

In his recent publication, *Students as Researchers*, Michael Fielding, a researcher at the University of Sussex, invokes a number of questions: on what grounds are the claims of "students as radical agents of change" made? how radical are these changes?

It will be contended that whilst Fielding's study is of interest, the changes documented and implemented in Sharnbrook Upper School are neither highly radical nor representative of a broader transformative education, but rather denote curriculum and management issues for this particular school. While there are secondary questions surrounding the practical application of this study, Fielding's case study provides an effective starting point for a discussion of dialogic democracy and students' voice through student participation. However the study falls short in providing evidence of a transformative education beyond the boundaries of Sharnbrook. This claim can only be made if this study can be applied to other schools.

In critiquing Fielding's work and ascertaining the adaptability of his study in other contexts, I will draw upon the work of Pearl and Knight. Pearl and Knight emphasise the necessity of democracy within schools; however, in contrast to Fielding, they focus on a ground-up approach, which is inclusive of all students. It should be noted that this article is not suggesting the work of Fielding does not, in essence, have merit to stand alone; rather, I will argue that by viewing this case study through the work of Pearl and Knight, greater pragmatic conclusions can be reached.

Fielding's case study in summary

The primary focus of Fielding's case study and subsequent paper was the notion of student 'voice' and a commitment to students' agency. These concerns were built on the recognition that in contemporary western societies there is a general reluctance to speak on behalf of the 'other', be they of different sexuality, race,

ethnicity, etc. Fielding contends that this concern does not extend to speaking on behalf of students. From these concerns, Fielding developed a study working with Sharnbrook Upper School and Community College, with whom he appears to have had previous affiliation. A project running from 1997-1999 involving *Students as Researcher* was implemented. Concluding from this project, Fielding suggests that a strong case can be made:

"...not just for students as centrally important in school improvement, but as agents of a more profound transformative education. Work emerging from this initiative points both to cultural change (a radical collegiality) and to highly innovative structural change taking place within the school (students as authors and guardians of curriculum change)" (Fielding, 1999: Abstract)

It is on these grounds and the students' challenges that Fielding makes his claim of students as "radical agents of change". The democratic nature of this study will be critiqued to question how democracy has apparently evolved from an undemocratic beginning. To thoroughly examine the plausibility of these claims, the project and outcomes as defined by Fielding need to be outlined.

The purpose of *Students as Researcher* as outlined by Fielding was for students to identify issues they saw as important in their daily experience of schooling. With the support of staff in facilitating and enabling roles, students would gather data, make meaning together, and put forward subsequent recommendation for changes. These would be shared with their fellow students, with staff and with the government body of the school (Fielding, 1999: 1).

Leading from recommendations made by students, Fielding contends that the student voice requested a negotiated curriculum and a negotiated pedagogy. As a result of these suggestions, changes were made to the Life Skills program. The area of greatest interest for Fielding was the inclusion of three students into the

group that monitored and evaluated these changes. This, he argues, indicated that students were becoming active participants in the structural changes of the school. He contended that the structural changes followed a cultural change in attitudes regarding students, this was brought about through the quality of their research and their ability to "identify and articulate insights into curriculum practice and curriculum models in way which were not forth-coming for teaching staff." (Fielding, 1999: 4) Effectively students saw and viewed issues differently from staff.

The second challenge that Fielding outlines is that surrounding a radical collegiate. He argues that the study at Sharnbrook indicates a much more overt, inclusive form of dialogic democracy practice within the school. This challenge arose from research collected by the ITT researchers in the first year. Suggestions from this research surround trainee teachers in the school. A program was implemented which had student teachers working with students across age and ability ranges, to answer a number of questions, revolving around the development of more effective training for teachers with direct input into practices by students.

The final challenge to apparently emerge from the study was one surrounding the issue of 'transversal politics and the possibility of inclusive emancipated community'. This possibility, Fielding suggests, emerged at Sharnbrook through interactions between students and teachers.

Contradictions and confusion? Problems with Fielding's approach

There are two major areas of concern emerging from this study. Primarily, there is the possibility that Fielding is at times using findings to support already developed theories rather than using findings to develop theories. The three main areas that the students suggested change in, are realistically not highly radical in nature. Effectively, students are saying get experts, let us practise our skills, listen to us, and effectively talk to us. It seems curious that while Fielding advocated the necessity of listening to student's voices, he seems overly astonished when they had something to say. As an additional note to this problem, it is difficult at times from the information presented to ascertain the actual findings and recommendations of the students as distinct from Fielding's critique of these findings.

The second area of concern surrounds the contradiction in Fielding's call for a dialogic democracy as opposed to the practical implementation of this case study. Fielding never clearly articulates how students were selected for this project, only stating that a small group of interested staff and himself "made the decision to form a group of students of mixed age and gender" (Fielding, 1999: 1). Upon further e-mail contact with Fielding, I discovered that the criteria changed over time. The school espoused a commitment to equal value and this meant that the staff suggested that the group should not be an elite one. It was of mixed age and gender. Initially the deputy head approached heads of year and asked them if there were any students they thought might enjoy a challenge. So the students involved were mostly known to the deputy. As the project gained confidence and experience, the 'selection' process was extended in two senses: students volunteered as well as being approached by peers and staff, and there was a deliberate attempt to include students who were more 'at risk'. The initiative currently has 80-90 students involved and 14 staff. (Fielding, 2001)

The selection of students raises questions as to the nature of the research conducted by the students. Considering that the students were chosen, is there any indication that the issues were likewise predetermined or at least subject to the approval or disapproval of the staff involved? This question is difficult to answer; however it has major implications for Fielding's findings and in particular for his claim of radical challenges. Whilst students investigated problems within the school, there was no suggestion of what might have occurred had the students chosen to focus on issues of greater concern outside the school, or alternatively had the students suggested issues that did not meet the approval of Fielding or the teachers involved.

The essential irony of this study is found in Fielding's concluding remarks that:

Central to such a project are issues to do with power and authority, freedom and equality, and, as important and necessary as each of these, the dispositions and values of democratic living without which democracy itself becomes a mere mechanism which more often than not turns out to betray the very aspirations that inspire its inception. (Fielding, 1999: 12)

Through the selection of students for this project and the concomitant exclusion of others, it could be argued that this type of betrayal has occurred. At the very least the implementations of this project represent an authoritarian controlled democracy. The fact that the students initially involved in this project were chosen for this project,

suggests that while Fielding advocates democracy in schools, he sees clear problems with the application of this.

Fielding's conclusions about the Sharnbrook project point to a transformative notion of education, which presumably he sees to be applicable to other locations. Evidently there are concerns and questions surrounding the *Students as Researchers* as implemented at Sharnbrook.

This is not to suggest, however, that this project is without merit and cannot be a useful approach. It is simply contended that for the *Students as Researchers* to be a project that is true to the ideas of its establishment, some considerations and changes could be made. Central to all of Fielding's conclusions are the concepts of **student voice, participation and dialogic democracy** in schools. To achieve this, Fielding is establishing the school as a separate institution from the community as a whole. This is evident in the fact that students researched issues only within the school. This attempt to create an overly harmonious environment in the school may not ultimately assist students to cope with issues in the world outside their school. A solution to these potential problems could be to encourage involvement by and in the wider community; this may lead to students developing real radical solutions to contemporary problems or, at least, to investigations of the implications of their work to their own future and to broader community issues. In this regard, the work of Pearl and Knight becomes significant.

Pearl and Knight bring it to the community

Pearl and Knight contend that a major emphasis of democratic education is to provide all students with citizenship skills. In this regard, they advocate an active citizenship initially within a classroom environment. Paralleling Fielding's critique of schools as institutions which dislocate students' voice, Pearl and Knight argue that "Nowhere is democratic citizenship less respected than in school" (Pearl and Knight, 1999: 98). In this vein, they concur with Fielding's suggestion of the necessity of creating active citizenship. They argue "one only learns to be a democratic citizen by practising democratic citizenship" (Pearl and Knight, 1999: 98). For them, this is through student government, community service and cooperative learning.

Pearl and Knight's model includes all students in very practical development of democratic citizen skills. They learn to debate issues that affect their lives. They learn what rights are and where these rights end through the exercise of rights and by participating in discussions about the definition and boundaries of rights (Pearl and Knight, 1999: 100). At all times, the activities are inclusive of all students, involving cooperative learning and using critical problem solving. This process will assist all students to construct active citizenship by being able to recognise problems and develop solutions.

One of the critical factors of the model that Pearl and Knight present, includes the development of effective student governments. These, they contend, are presently ineffective institutions that hold no real power. To combat this problem, they suggest that student governments with fiscal, judicial and other administrative powers need to be developed so that students have real experiences with the obligations, responsibilities and repercussions of an active democracy. They recognise this to be a long process, however a necessary one. It is at this point that the work of Pearl and Knight can add to that of Fielding. Whilst Fielding outlines the increasing need for a dialogic democracy in schools, the *Students as Researchers* project appears to have been established on grounds that were not democratic. If it can be argued that the *Students as Researchers* are working effectively as representatives of the whole student body to locate problems with the structure and pedagogy of the school, surely these representatives need to be accountable to the students they represent? In light of this, the *Students as Researchers* need to be elected upon students' expressions of interest. There are clearly problems with this, as outlined by Pearl and Knight, in terms of the danger of student elections becoming a popularity contest. However, if students have a clear and effective understanding of the importance of the democratic process, these problems could be reduced. In Pearl and Knight's model, student governments make real decisions. As part of this understanding of a real democracy, the *Students as Researchers* project could be included to isolate problems in the school that affect all students and develop solutions that are workable for all students. Pearl and Knight support Fielding's advocacy of active democracies, yet they diverge at a more practical level on the implementation of these skills and this democracy into schools. While this divergence may seem small, I believe it is critical to the effectiveness of the Sharnbrook study.

Throughout his paper, Fielding makes note of the highly inclusive environment characteristic at Sharnbrook. This was an environment which was particularly primed for the project. If, as Fielding claims, this case study pushes "hard at the boundaries of our current traditions and practices" (Fielding, 1999: 4), it is important to consider how the school environment affected the success of this project, and therefore how successful it would be at another location. Knight contends that there is considerable evidence to demonstrate that there is a relationship between school organisation ('school climate') and students' academic achievement, and the subsequent effect on students' behaviour and attitude (Knight, 1985: 257). There is clearly a link between school climate and student attitude and the potential for student participation. Knight holds that all students need to be included as active participants in their education. All students need to be integrated into all aspects of schooling. This call for active student agency has clear parallels with Fielding's claim. However, the inclusion of all students in this process is central. There is no indication in Fielding's paper of students who are considered 'at risk'. This gap is concerning because it seems clear that the educational experience of these students would be very distinct from those who are already actively engaged in their education, as were those selected at Sharnbrook. Knight's solutions to these problems are around a curriculum which advocates student involvement and accountability. This can be viewed through examples given of participation projects implemented in a number of Melbourne schools, which have provided "an opportunity for students to make decisions in school about the school" (Knight, 1985: 269). These programs were implemented as a curriculum support model and included action-research teams, youth service teams, youth consultant teams, youth advocacy planning groups, youth counsellors and youth communicators. (Knight, 1985: 269-70) Most interesting is Knight's argument that

Role change is possible within these projects. Engaging students as active participants in their own learning removes them from being passive dependant remedials to young people who can demonstrate they do care about themselves and others. (Knight, 1985: 269)

Fundamentally these youth participation programs engage all students including those 'at risk'.

By placing the Fielding project into the context of Pearl and Knight's democratic education theory, there is an increased possibility of effective democratic structural changes in school. This in turn would be reflected in a more active and cohesive citizenship in the wider community.

How can this be achieved in the classroom?

While much reference is made to the development of democratic school and democratic education, there seem few practical methodologies that are advocated to facilitate this. Encouraging students' voice within the classroom and wider school allows for increased student ownership and engagement in education. Problem based learning (PBL) encourages students to work collaboratively with each other, developing critical research and problems solving skills, and it has a flow-on effect of encouraging students to reflect and moderate their learning. Through the combination of these two processes, an active critical democracy can be achieved in the classroom. The skills of democratic citizenship, such as developing and using your voice and reacting against disempowering social ideologies and policies need to be learnt. Via critical democracy enacted in the classroom, students can develop the skills to be participants in a democratic society within a global context.

Democratic citizenship has become a catch phrase espoused much in contemporary education literature [1]. Indeed the idea of democratic citizenship has been taken on as a global concern within the political and media arenas with the apparent current threat to global democracy through terrorism. Considering these concerns, it seems pertinent to ask where and how individuals learn democratic skills. The Victorian Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF II) would argue that this knowledge and skills are supplied to students in the study of Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE). Yet the place and methodology of this is somewhat elusive. Although the CSF II places this as a central goal within its rationale, the structure of the strands of this subject, in the areas of history, geography, and economics and society, seem to offer little real space for a study of democratic citizenship - particularly within a global context.

It is essential at this time to define what this article will consider the skills of democratic citizenship within a global context, and for this the term *active critical democracy* will be used. This term will look at the different factors that affect individual access to information and power within Western society and their ability to critical analysis of information presented to them, likewise their ability to act on this information. This will be undertaken with the perceptions that access to information and knowledge is

central to choices made within a democratic society. Furthermore the ability to critically read information is at the centre of decisions to take action on issues. Democracy in this sense will be defined using the work of Boomer as a "regime devoted to ensuring that all citizens have a voice and a say in how their own lives are to be conducted, how local affairs are conducted, and collectively how the nation is to be governed." (Boomer, 1999: 101). From this, it seems essential that students are actively encouraged to develop and use their voice within the classroom.

Student voice can be actively encouraged in the classroom through the process of negotiating the curriculum. The concept of negotiated curriculum raises question about what should be taught and why we teach. These questions have apparently shifting answers and focuses, given the social and political climate. For Boomer one of the central features of the democratic classroom is negotiation. Within this, he contends that learning will be at its best and most efficient through negotiation, where the "student intends, agrees, undertakes to work to some end." (Boomer, 1999: 104)

Negotiated curriculum is an active process in education today, presenting as re-creation of what was originally known as 'integrative curriculum' which was enacted to 'design the core of democratic education' (Beane, 1997). Using this model, students are able to interact with democracy at many levels:

- (a) *Democracy as animated by idealized values that together seek the well-being of all individuals within a vital and healthy community;*
- (b) *democracy as organized on shared authority and mutual responsibility; and*
- (c) *democracy as relevant upon knowledge that is open to alternative sources and end. (Mikel, 2000: 117)*

Negotiated curriculum allows a space for student voice within the practice of the classroom; the experience of having and using a voice is essential for democratic citizenship and this must and can be produced in the classroom (Pearl and Knight, 1999: 98).

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primary a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience ... Since a democracy society repudiates the principles of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education (John Dewey, 1916 in Mikel, 2000: 108)

Whilst negotiated curriculum gives students a voice, Problem Based Learning (PBL) can give them the skills to use this voice responsibly within a democratic society. PBL offers a workable methodology to engage students in a real

life context education. The central philosophy of this approach is that 'the problem comes first' allowing students to undertake self directed learning (SDL). PBL promotes skills for life, with a flow-on benefit of facilitating life-long learning - one of the key propositions made by the Australian Deans of Education in their 2001 paper.

The adoption of PBL gives a process for teaching or rather facilitating learning and a curriculum.

The curriculum consists of carefully designed problems that demand, for the learner, acquisitions of critical knowledge, problem solving proficiency, self-directed learning strategies and team participation skills.
www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/pbl/info.html

Thus PBL can be used to foster skills essential for active democratic citizenship.

The process of using negotiated PBL involves students initially negotiating topics to be studied with the teacher. A problem scenario is then developed around the topic and students work in small groups (fostering the development of problem solving and interpersonal skills), finally developing possible solutions or outcomes for the problem. This process allows the students to become active learners within a democratic environment. Likewise, this process allows the objective of democratic education to move from rhetoric to the classroom.

Taking it to the school:

The Allingham Secondary College (ASC) case study [2]

A year seven class at ASC was introduced to the concepts of democracy and citizenship skills through two distinct teaching methodologies. During a unit focusing on ancient Greece, the concept of Greek democracy was introduced to students through a modified role-play. Students were allocated roles of citizen and non-citizen. They were then asked to develop and vote on rules for the class, obviously with only the citizens involved. This process was then repeated with all students allocated citizenship. During a class discussion after the activity, it was clear that the students understood the negative and positive aspects of being citizens or having citizenship rights. Perhaps made more straightforward for them, given the restricted citizenship they experience as teenagers. This process was effective to a degree; however, it was also relatively inactive. It raises questions such as: where could the students go from here? Although they now understood the historical bases of democracy and had some insights into Australian democracy and the experience of decision-making and

majority voting, this knowledge had no real action outside the classroom for them as 12 and 13 year olds.

At a later point in the year, the same students were introduced to negotiated PBL. The initial introduction of negotiated curriculum meet with the seemingly usual suspicion and distrust on behalf of the students. (Muir, 1998) However once it was made clear to the students that their answers would form the basis of the work they would undertake over the next few weeks, they rapidly became engaged. Students were asked to answer questions surrounding concerns they had at the levels of self and world. The class occurred only eight days after the September 11 attacks in the United States and this provided a significant focus for global concerns. (This topic would be finally taken up to study in a slightly modified form.) The students were then moved into groups to begin discussions of their concerns and to attempt to find connections between these, the first stage in 'negotiate to a consensus topic'.

In the second negotiated lesson, the years 7s were presented with a table of the questions that they had produced in the last lesson and provided with the opportunity to read through and discuss then. After that a topic was defined, that being 'conflict', focusing on the current 'War on Terrorism' and its affects on the environment, women and children. A PBL scenario was developed [3] and the student formed groups to investigate the issues and develop possible solutions to the scenario.

Critical media skills

Given the topic chosen by the students, (that of global conflict with particular reference to the United States, terrorism and Afghanistan, and its effects on the environment and families), there were many opportunities to analyse different media representations and scaffold students into asking critical questions about the images and information they were presented. At this level this was as simple as getting students to look at who produced or wrote the information, how information from different sources was different and why they thought this was. Obviously, with older students, questions would be more advanced. By means of scaffolding students into critical media analysis and information interpretation, they developed skills which are vital to function as informed democratic citizens.

The development of a global voice

By far the most exciting outcome to evolve from this process was students' interaction with the UNICEF website

(www.unicef.org). The teacher introduced this site, although students used it in a variety of ways, a number making forum entries on the topic of children and war. It was made clear that there were no restrictions placed on what they could say in this forum - they were simply encouraged to respect and use the forum responsibility - with some producing highly impassioned and considered responses.

I'm disgusted at the amount of selfish people taking stupid irresponsible actions towards our society today. Many of the actions thought to be right are wrong ... very, very wrong! The terrorist attacks in America were horrific and the attacks on Afghanistan are tragic. I wish more people would realize that fighting is not going to resolve anything! Stop playing around and open your eyes to what was once a happy community and is now a place of tears and death!!!

The Taliban and Osama bin Laden are terrible to their country (it shouldn't really be their country). It feels weird to see the documents on Afghanistan - it's like a world within a world. It makes me so angry to see all the suffering and pain they go through, and there's no way out. I want to go and help them. War: it's like the Taliban want war, hijacking planes in America. My question is: Why do they do it? Women need rights in Afghanistan, just like men have. How are they meant to feed their children if it is against the law to work? The Taliban is terrible. It also made me angry to know that Australia didn't accept the refugees from Afghanistan, and people had the attitudes like 'Queue jumpers'.

I think this war is stupid because they keep on killing each other and soon there will be no one to kill. The war sucks!!!

http://www.unicef.org/voy/cgi-bin/zdisc.cgi?index_lessrep [4]

Students displayed a passion never experienced with ancient Greece. These students had become active critical readers of the images and representations that the media had presented to them; they were no longer content to simply access information, but began to analyse the motivations and differences in the information. The process of giving students voice led to students developing confidence in their voice and using this voice to make statements about issues of global concern. They were enacting essential democratic skills. Students became active agents critically aware of their own beliefs on a global issue. This enabled students to develop a global perspective with a critical awareness of their "own and other societies and cultures... (in) a search for alternative views, experiences and methods that acknowledge equally of people within and between nations" (Calder and Smith, 1993: 17)

Moreover, through the combination of developing critical media skills and encouraging students to become authors in the media, students were able to be

participants within the discourse of war, peace and democracy. Through this participation students developed the

Skills, values and attitudes that lead to commitment to responsible action for change towards ... a more just society, locally and globally (Calder and Smith, 1993: 17)

Through engagement in this process, students not only developed skills to participate as confident, responsibility and active citizens in a democratic society in a global context, but they were these active citizens. Students were given a real voice in the classroom and encouraged to use this voice.



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Web sites: <http://www.unicef.org/voy/meeting/war/warhome.html>
<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/pbl/info.html>

Notes:

- [1] This refers specifically to the work of Edward Mikel, Roger Soder, John I. Goodlad, and Timothy J. McMannon.
- [2] Not the real name of the school.
- [3] See appendix
- [4] It is important to note that the most exciting outcome to develop from this process was not essentially the responses that students made - at all time within the classroom, students were encouraged to respect and not judge each others' opinions - but rather the passions and the action that they felt they could take on this issue.

Appendix: Scenario

Kathy, a grade 5/6 teacher at Rocking Hill Primary School, has been watching the news about the terrorist attacks in the USA and the USA's response to these attacks, with great concern. She has been involved in debate in the staff room with other teachers around the issues of discussing the present conflict with students in her classrooms. Of greatest concern for her is how much information she should discuss with her students, and how much information they already know from watching television. She believes that they need to know what is happening in the world, but does not want to distress them too much. After speaking to a friend who was a high school teacher, it was suggested that information produced by older students might be one useful tool for teachers to use.

You have been asked as a group to develop an informative book for Year 5-6 students about the present conflict and other important issues around conflict that you have researched.

There are a number of points you should remember while undertaking this task: you have to be clear in the information you present; the presentation should be creative and attractive to Year 5/6 audiences; while facts are important, you need to consider the consequences of presenting unnecessarily disturbing/negative images or information to students. It is suggested you work in small groups, based on personal choice.

Eliza Smith, student, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne: <smitheliza@yahoo.com.au>

News and Reviews

Youth Affairs Council of South Australia Youth Participation and Action Group (YPAG)

The Youth Affairs Council of South Australia is currently welcoming young South Australians to become involved in our Youth Participation and Action Group (YPAG).

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES - PASSION!

If you are PASSIONATE, have a touch of DEDICATION and the DRIVE to express your interest in issues that affect you... WE WANT YOU!

Who?

YPAG-ers come from everywhere! - it's open to all young people living in South Australia aged between 12 and 26.

What?

The Youth Participation and Action Group (YPAG) is a sub-committee of the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (YACSA), which is the peak body for youth affairs in SA. Through YACSA, YPAG works to get the word out to big decision-makers like the Government as well as to the wider community about what's important for young people. Some of the big issues for YPAG at the moment include: live music venues for young people, promoting positive body image to young women, and access to drinking water @ nightclubs and recovery parties.

When?

YPAG usually meets on the first Wednesday of every month @ YACSA in the Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide. There's also an e-mail group that gets chatting in between meetings and helps us stay in touch with members who can't get to meetings.

For further information, or if you'd like to join, please call Ann Deslandes @ YACSA on (08) 8226 3080, or e-mail her on ann@yacsa.com.au

Ben Kilsby
YPAG Convenor

Democracy Starts Here: Junior School Councils at Work

Descriptions and practical information about active citizenship in primary schools
\$7 a copy (posted); \$12 for 2 copies

Letter to the *Times Educational Supplement* and *Education Guardian* from Mehreen Malik, ESSA network member and 16 year-old School Council chair

As a pupil who chairs a School Council, I have developed a keen interest in pupil democracy. I am pleased that the White Paper *Achieving success* talks of the need of "supporting young people's participation in decisions affecting them" but very disappointed that the DfES consultation document on the reform of school governance totally overlooks school students in the list of school stakeholders. There are very few schools in the UK that enable pupils to attend or give presentations to governors' meetings.

When researching about pupil democracy in some other European countries, I have found that their legislation states not only that schools should have structures such as pupil councils but that pupils should be represented on major school boards and committees, within the school, locally, regionally and nationally. We appear to be almost unique in not having pupils on governing bodies. The wider society of these countries benefits through the growing up of young adults who understand and respect human rights and the practical reality of democratic decision-making.

I have become determined to campaign with others for the introduction of an English School Student Association (ESSA) for consulting pupils in matters affecting us. Such organisations exist in the overwhelming majority of European states and work together as members of OBESSU. In some they are actually required by law (as in Scandinavia); in most they are financially supported by government, given active encouragement and regularly consulted over all aspects of national education policy. So far ESSA exists as an electronic network and is supported by both the National Union of Students and the British Youth Council, which regard the skills and attitudes that young people could acquire through activity in ESSA as excellent training for similar involvement in the NUS and the BYC and an antidote to current high levels of apathy towards involvement in political and civil society.

Allowing pupils to attend and make contributions at governor's meetings is a very small step in contributing to the recognition that citizenship 'should be lived, not just learned about.'

Mehreen Malik
ESSA member
malikmehreen@hotmail.com

Victorian Secondary Students' Network (VSSN)

The VSSN was established at a statewide secondary student conference held in Ballarat in July of this year. (For further information please see the article in *Connect* 130). Since the conference in July, the VSSN State Executive has been at work setting out the interim rules and regulations that the VSSN will abide by until a constitution is put into place at next year's conference.

The state executive has, during the past few months, had monthly meetings, hosted by the Office for Youth, to discuss the future direction of the VSSN. Some of the things that the State Executive have so far been involved with include:

- **Constitution:** State Executive members are currently involved in writing a constitution - the set of rules that the VSSN will work by. It is intended that this document will be presented to the 2002 State Student Conference, where it will be open to Victorian students to have their say and it will be voted upon.
- **2002 Launch:** The VSSN is set to be launched early in 2002, including distribution of information to all schools, a formal dinner and unveiling of the web site.
- **Publicity:** Currently being produced is an information package, which will be sent to all schools, media and councils early in the new year (coinciding with the launch). This package is set to include information about our history, what is happening, our structure and how to get involved.
- **Finance:** There is a taskforce looking into the financing arrangements of the VSSN, such as where our income will come from, as well as finalising an agreement with the Victorian Governments' Office for Youth.
- **State Conference 2002:** The 2002 Annual Statewide Secondary Student Conference is being investigated. At this point in time, it looks as though the conference will focus around the constitution for the VSSN.

Some of the regions around the state are starting to organise meetings and events. For a rough idea, here is what's happening in two of the metropolitan regions:

- **Southern Metropolitan Region:** Southern has had three meetings, with a fourth to be held in early January. The Central Subregion held a conference on the 28th of November, where students from Greater Dandenong and Kingston met to network with other students. The Westernport Subregion is also planning a 'campference', to be held during National Youth Week on the 13th and 14th of April. The region as a whole is planning an awards evening for students in the Southern Region in April 2002.
- **Northern Metropolitan Region:** Northern has been having regular meetings, with the last meeting held on the 27th of November.

If you would like more information about what the VSSN is up to please contact Dale Mills via email at mills_dale@yahoo.com.au

Dale Mills

Publicity Officer, VSSN State Executive

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Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:
(03) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

Australian:

Approach (Banyule Youth Services, Vic) Issue 10, 2001

Identity (City of Whitehorse, Vic) Winter 2001

Education for Rural Development in Australia (Youth Research Centre, Vic) Working Paper 22

Network News (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) September 2001

Policy is not a dirty word... (Applied Education Policy Seminar Group, Vic) November 2001

Rural Council Youth Project (RMIT University and MAV, Vic) Newsletters 1, 2; August, October 2001

TAKING PARTicipation seriously (NSW Commission for Children and Young People) Kit; 2001

YAPRap (Youth Action and Policy Association, NSW) Vol 11 No 7, August 2001

Yikes (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 1, Ed 9; Nov 2001

International:

Communicating ... (The ESRC Network project, UK) No 1, May 2001

Communication Research Trends (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, USA) Volume 20 (2000/2001) Numbers 1-4

ESSIC News (OBESSA, Amsterdam) June/July/Aug '01

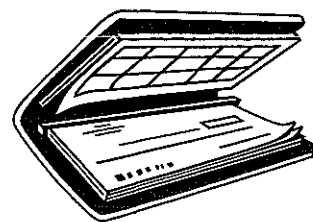
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The documents listed in this column may be of general background interest. A photocopy is available for research purposes. The length and cost (to cover copying and postage) is listed. Please order by code number.

A full, computerised index of these documents is now available from **Connect** for \$3; this can be accessed and printed by topic, key-word etc or simply sequentially.

Code Description/Pages/Cost

- 497 **Youth Participation** (Roger Holdsworth: address to the 'Charting the Course' ACT and SE NSW Regional Youth Services Conference, Oct 2001) (15 pp; \$1.50)
- 498 **Make Yourself Heard!!** (Macedon Ranges Youth Forum, August 2000) - resource booklet (31 pp; \$3.10)
- 499 **Report for DfEE on Student Participation - Executive Summary** (Derry Hannam, Southampton, UK) (2 pp; \$0.60)
- 500 **Attitudes, Attainment, Attendance and Exclusion in Secondary Schools That Take Student Participation Seriously: A Pilot Study** (Derry Hannam, The Phoenix Education Trust, UK - paper at ESRC: Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Project: 'Pupil Voice and Democracy', University of Cambridge, October, 2001) (7 pp; \$1.00)
- 501 **Aims and Objectives for English School Students' Association (ESSA)** (Mehreen Malik and Derry Hannam, The Phoenix Education Trust, UK) (4 pp; \$0.80)
- 502 **Consulting Young People in Schools** (Jean Ruddock and Julia Flutter: Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning: Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Network Project : Outline, newsletters, publication list) (14 pp; \$1.40)

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• Cross-referenced index to contents of *Connect* back issues (\$3) \$

Miscellaneous Resources:

- Students and Work - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 (\$5) \$
- 'Youth Radio' issue of 3CR's **CRAM Guide** (1985) (\$1) \$
- Democratic Decision Making in Schools - Victorian PEP (1987) (\$3) \$
- Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996) (\$7 or \$12 for two copies) \$

Foxfire Resources:

- Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) (\$25) \$
- Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) (\$25) \$
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